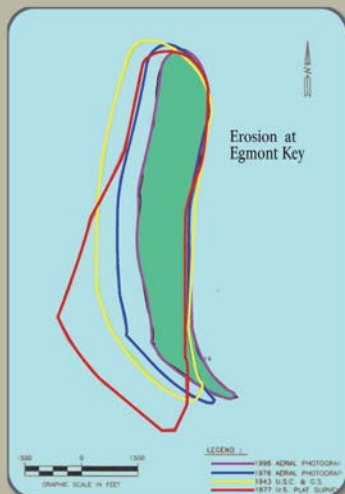


Our Shrinking Shores



Egmont's ever-changing western shoreline through the years

Lost to the Sea

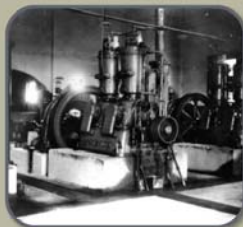
Egmont Key is gradually disappearing. Storms, high winds, high tides, and sea level rise eat away at the shoreline daily. Exposed to the full force of the Gulf of Mexico, the western shore is particularly vulnerable to erosion.

Measureable Amounts

In 1877, Egmont Key was assessed at 539 acres. By 1969, it had reduced to 405 acres. In 1974, when designated a national wildlife refuge, it encompassed 392 acres. Today, Egmont Key is approximately 260 acres, less than half the size when first surveyed.

The Past Imperiled

Egmont's historic structures are vanishing. What was once a centrally located coal power plant is now a pile of rubble at the water's edge. A mining casemate located along the southwest shoreline has also collapsed. Three remaining gun batteries and the icehouse/mess hall are currently in danger, while Batteries Burchstead and John Page have already succumbed to heavy erosion, separated from the island, and are now submerged platforms.



Ft. Dade power plant early - 1900



Ft. Dade power plant - 1988



Ft. Dade power plant - 2011

On the Battlefield

The refuge works to conserve and protect the barrier island habitat and historical structures of national significance. Management has included renourishment of the northwest beach in 1999-2000 and again in 2006 as part of a USACE project. Stabilization with oyster shells and native vegetation is also effective.



The beach cannot be renourished too often. Important food for foraging shorebirds, invertebrates in the sand must be allowed to recover.

Their Future at Risk

Erosion seriously threatens the island's natural resources. Acres of beachfront have been lost, critical to the survival of nesting shorebirds and sea turtles as well as habitat for year-round residents. Nearby Passage Key, another refuge for migratory birds, was destroyed by a hurricane in June 2006 and recently succumbed to the sea.



Egmont Key NWR is dedicated to preserving the island's cultural and natural heritage before it is lost forever.